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Committee Assignments

Capital Budget (Chair)
Ways & Means (Vice Chair)
Education (Vice Chair)
Economic Development
(Vice Chair)
Financial Services, Insurance
& Housing

Bills to watch:

I'm happy to report that the following two bills died in the Senate.

SHB 1178 – Requires that schools and other publicly funded sexuality or abstinence education provide only medically and scientifically accurate information. This bill will stop “abstinence only” curriculums. *(Died in the Senate Education Committee)*

SHB 1809 – Expands the jurisdiction of the human rights commission to include “sexual orientation.” This definition would apply to all employees, including churches. *(Died in the Senate Judiciary Committee)*

Unfortunately, it looks like a bill to prevent Internet pornography died in the House as well.

SSB 5242 – Requires libraries to provide pornography filters on all public access computers. *(Died in the House Tech. Telecommunications Com.)*

Sen. Joe Zarelli's

UPDATE FROM OLYMPIA

4/7/03

Dear Friends,

Senate Republicans broke traditional protocol last week by releasing our budget before the House of Representatives. Many Senators expressed frustration with House Democrats, as they seemed unable to agree within their own caucus. Rather than continue the waiting game (with only 23 days left in the session!), Senate Republicans decided enough was enough.

Our budget eliminates a nearly \$3 billion shortfall and leaves about \$253 million in reserves, **without raising taxes!** The proposal fills the budget hole with a three-tiered, balanced approach:

- Foregoing desired increases (\$1.2 billion, or 40 percent)
- Utilization of existing revenue (\$600 million, or 20 percent)
- Ongoing policy savings (\$1.2 billion, or 40 percent)

Foregoing desired increases includes the governor's proposal to not fund state employee and teacher COLAs (\$517 million) and to *delay* the full I-728 class size reduction funding. State employees will also have to pay a larger portion of their health care costs (\$315 million).

Utilization of existing revenues includes the transfer of money (\$560 million) collected to expand the Basic Health Plan (BHP).

Policy changes and reductions includes restructuring the BHP; changing the state pension funding method; reducing state FTEs (mostly through attrition); reforming the state tort liability system; and additional savings through the supplemental budget (mentioned to you in a previous update).

And while these policy changes result in \$1.2 billion in savings, enough capacity was created to increase salaries for beginning teachers and low-paid classified staff (\$48 million); restore \$150 million in reductions to developmentally disabled, mental health programs and nursing homes; and a continuation of key High Tech and Rural research and development tax incentives.

Hard choices were made, but our budget allows us to live within our means while protecting our most vulnerable citizens, helping our economy, and filling in one of the worst budget holes in our state's history.

It has been a pleasure to hear from so many of you this session via e-mail, phone calls and letters. Knowing your ideas, problems and concerns helps me tremendously as I represent you in Olympia.

Sen. Joe Zarelli, 18th Legislative District